

**SOUTH DAKOTA DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION  
SPECIAL EDUCATION PROGRAM**

**Wolsey School District  
Continuous Improvement Monitoring Process Report 2004**

**Team Members:** Penny McCormick-Gilles, Education Specialist, and Chris Sargent, Educational Specialist

**Dates of On Site Visit:** November 09, 2004

**Date of Report:** November 17, 2004

---

This report contains the results of the steering committee's self-assessment and the validation of the self-assessment by the Special Education Programs. The report addresses six principles – General Supervision, Free Appropriate Public Education, Appropriate Evaluation, Procedural Safeguards, Individualized Education Program and Least Restrictive Environment. Each principle is rated based on the following scale:

<b>Promising Practice</b>	The district/agency exceeds this requirement through the implementation of innovative, high-quality programming and instructional practices.
<b>Meets Requirements</b>	The district/agency consistently meets this requirement.
<b>Needs Improvement</b>	The district/agency has met this requirement but has identified areas of weakness that left unaddressed may result in non-compliance.
<b>Out of Compliance</b>	The district/agency consistently does not meet this requirement.
<b>Not applicable</b>	In a small number of cases, the standard may not be applicable for your district/agency. If an item is not applicable, the steering committee should briefly explain why the item is NA. Example – no private schools within the district boundaries.

---

<b>Principle 1 – General Supervision</b>
--

General supervision means the school district's administrative responsibilities to ensure federal and state regulations are implemented and a free appropriate public education is provided for each eligible child with a disability. The specific areas addressed in principle one are child find, referral procedures, children voluntarily enrolled by parents in private schools, students placed by the school district, improving results through performance goals and indicators (assessment, drop out, graduation), professional development, suspension and expulsion rates.

**Steering Committee Self-Assessment Summary**

Data sources used:

- General District Information

- Surveys
- Files

### **Meets Requirements**

There are no private schools in the Wolsey School district.

At this time, the district does not have any students placed out of district. Previously, with an out of district placement the superintendent and special education teacher attended all meetings either in person or by teleconference.

Based on a graduation rate of 100% for students with disabilities, the steering committee found that data-based decision-making procedures are used to determine progress toward the state's performance goals.

The Wolsey School District did not have a suspension or expulsion of a disabled student during the time period addressed (2000 – 2003).

### **Needs Improvement**

Based on interviews and data from screenings, the steering committee agreed that the Wolsey School District needs to improve the preschool screening process so that they have contact with children at an earlier age.

The committee determined that the district needs to improve the referral process in order to have an effective pre-referral and referral system in place.

The steering committee found, through parent surveys, that there needs to be a better way to inform parents about training programs offered to teachers.

## **Validation Results**

### **Meets Requirements**

The review team agrees with all areas identified by the steering committee as meeting requirements for general supervision. Based on teacher interviews and file reviews, the team also feels that Wolsey School District has effective pre-referral and referral system that meets requirements. The elementary teachers and high school teachers feel that they have a good working relationship with the special education teachers and understand the referral process. Prior to a referral, interventions in the classroom setting are put into place and these interventions are documented by the teacher. Referral documents were found in all files reviewed.

### **Areas that need improvement**

The review team agrees that, while the Wolsey School District has a child find process in place, records indicate that the majority of children who are being screened are four and five year olds. The identification of younger children is an appropriate goal of the steering committee.

Through interviews it was apparent that this district provides a variety of trainings that deal with disabilities. The team agrees that the district can find a better way to inform parents of these trainings.

### **Areas out of compliance**

**The following issue needs to be addressed immediately:**

**ARSD 24:05:22:03 Certified child.**

A certified child is a child in need of special education or special education and related services who has received a multidisciplinary evaluation and has an individual education program formulated and approved by a local placement committee. Based on the evaluations given, the review team was unable to verify the eligibility category or educational impact for a child currently being served. This child is classified as multiple disabilities. The two disabilities that affect educational performance are traumatic brain injury and other health impairment. The last evaluation completed did not pull forward any medical information, nor were the areas of adaptive behavior or social skills evaluated. The district needs to conduct a comprehensive evaluation, which includes medical information and evaluations in all other areas listed in the eligibility guidelines.

## **Principle 2 – Free Appropriate Public Education**

All eligible children with disabilities are entitled to a free appropriate public education in the least restrictive environment. The specific areas addressed in principle two are the provision of FAPE to children residing in group homes, foster homes, or institutions, making FAPE available when a child reaches his/her 3<sup>rd</sup> birthday and providing FAPE to eligible children with disabilities who have been suspended or expelled from school for more than 10 cumulative days.

### **Steering Committee Self-Assessment Summary**

Data sources used:

- General District Information
- Surveys

#### **Meets Requirements**

The committee found that there were no suspensions or expulsions of a student with a disability during this time period.

#### **Areas that need improvement**

Based on surveys, the steering committee felt that the school district could do a better job of getting feedback from staff, parents, and current and former students, and organize the feedback into a useful part of their improvement plan.

### **Validation Results**

#### **Meets Requirements**

The review team agrees with the steering committee that the Wolsey School District meets requirements in the area of suspensions and expulsions in the area of free and appropriate public education (FAPE).

#### **Areas that need improvement**

Interviews with teachers showed that the district does encourage feedback; however no one knew how that feedback was used. Therefore, the review team agrees that this is an area that needs improvement.

Based on file reviews and interviews there were only two students where an extended school year was required; however there were two other students who were receiving counseling services over the summer. Counseling was listed as a related service on the IEP. The team agreed that the Wolsey School District needs to improve in the area of understanding that extended school year includes related services and these services should be addressed in the same way as all other extended school year services.

## **Principle 3 – Appropriate Evaluation**

A comprehensive evaluation is conducted by a team of knowledgeable staff, which also includes parental input. A valid and reliable evaluation will result in effective individualized education programs for eligible students. The specific areas addressed in principle three are written notice and consent for evaluation, evaluation procedures and instruments, eligibility determination, reevaluation and continuing eligibility.

### **Steering Committee Self-Assessment Summary**

Data sources used:

- General district information from data tables
- File reviews
- Surveys

#### **Meets Requirements**

The steering committee reported that the school district/agency ensures the proper identification of students with disabilities through the evaluation process. The school district utilizes the services of a school psychologist to assist with the assessments that are conducted by a team of knowledgeable staff and also includes parental input. A multidisciplinary team report is used for all students identified with a learning disability and the IEP team provides information to the parent on IEE and would consider these evaluations to determine whether a child has a particular category of disability.

#### **Areas that need improvement**

The steering committee agreed that the district needs to do a more adequate job of obtaining consent for evaluation and being in compliance with the 5 day notice period.

Based on file reviews, the committee determined that there was a lack of proper functional assessment, as well as a lack of proper transition assessments. They would like to see the district address these two areas.

After looking at the results of the file reviews, the committee felt that reevaluations were not always conducted prior to a dismissal from special education.

### **Validation Results**

#### **Meets Requirements**

The review team validates that the Wolsey School District makes use of valid test instruments and these tests are administered by qualified personnel. Copies of evaluations are received by parents and parents receive a copy of their rights.

In nine out of nine files reviewed, there was appropriate written notice and informed consent was obtained from parents before assessments were administered to a child as part of an evaluation or reevaluation. All parents received five days notice prior to a meeting or signed a waiver of the five days notice. The review team agreed that this area meets requirements.

#### **Areas out of compliance**

##### **ARSD 24:05:25:04, Evaluation procedures**

School districts shall ensure, at a minimum, a child is assessed in all areas related to the suspected disability and those evaluation procedures include a variety of assessment tools and strategies to gather

relevant functional and developmental information about the child. Of the ten files checked there was no evidence of functional assessment unless a speech evaluation was also completed. In three out of three files of students who were sixteen or older, there was not an evaluation completed to address the interests and skills of a transition-aged student. The special education teachers agreed that functional skills and transition are areas that they have not been assessing.

## **Principle 4 – Procedural Safeguards**

Parents of children with disabilities have certain rights available. The school makes parents aware of these rights and makes sure they are understood. The specific areas addressed in principle four are adult student/transfer of rights, content of rights, consent, written notice, confidentiality and access to records, independent educational evaluation (IEE), complaint procedures, and due process hearings.

### **Steering Committee Self-Assessment Summary**

Data sources used:

- File reviews
- Surveys
- General district information

#### **Meets Requirements**

The steering committee based on the data provided from the file reviews, and surveys completed by parents found that all parents are informed of their parental rights under IDEA. Six out of seven parents surveyed indicated that information from the school was written in their own language. One parent checked not applicable.

In one hundred percent of files review, the committee found that consent of reevaluation was obtained. The district informs parents of their right to revoke consent for placement or services.

The comprehensive plan addresses the appointment of surrogate parents; however the district does not have a student in need of a surrogate parent at this time.

Based on student file reviews and records, and review of policies and procedures in the comprehensive plan the steering committee determined that the district does provide the parents of a child in need of special education or special education and related services with the opportunity to inspect and review all educational records concerning the identification, evaluation, and educational placement of the child and the provision of a free appropriate public education.

The committee concluded that there are policies and procedures in place for responding to complaint actions. The district has not had a complaint in seven years.

Based on a review of the policies and procedures in the comprehensive plan, the steering committee agreed that the district has policies and procedures in place for responding to requests for due process that ensure compliance.

### **Validation Results**

#### **Meets Requirements**

The review team agrees with all areas identified by the steering committee as meeting the requirements.

## **Principle 5 – Individualized Education Program**

The Individualized Education Program (IEP) is a written document for a child with a disability that is developed, reviewed and revised by the IEP team, which includes the parent. The specific areas addressed in principle five are IEP team, IEP content, transition components for secondary IEPs, annual reviews, transition from early intervention program, and IEP related issues.

### **Steering Committee Self-Assessment Summary**

Data sources used:

- Surveys
- File reviews
- Data tables

#### **Areas that need improvement**

Of 13 files reviewed of students turning 14 or older, none of the prior notices invited the student, considered agency participation or indicated transition as a purpose for the meeting. The steering committee determined that this is an area that will need improvement.

The steering committee determined based on the file reviews, parent and teacher surveys that the district has appropriate team membership in the area of in-school personnel and IEP meetings are held within thirty days from receiving the report. Students age 14 and older are invited to the meeting by the special education teacher. Only one file reviewed by the team showed that someone from an outside agency was invited and the student was not formally invited; therefore the steering committee felt that this was an area that needed improvement.

While nine or thirteen files reviewed contained specific skills related to student's strengths and weaknesses, the committee noted that present levels of performance was not linked to functional evaluation in any of the files reviewed. In nine out of thirteen files, "as needed" statements were used on the modification page. The steering committee found this to be another area that needs improvement.

Based on file reviews, the steering committee found that the district failed to specifically document a statement of transition of services/activities, to link services to the present levels of performance or transition evaluations, or to consider related services in the area of transition for students who were sixteen years old or younger.

In eleven or thirteen files reviewed by the committee, IEPs were reviewed annually, on or before the date of the previous IEP. On two occasions, the parents called and could not come in to the school and the meeting was postponed. As a result of this, the steering committee felt this was an area that needed improvement.

### **Validation Results**

#### **Meets requirements**

In ten of the files reviewed the review team found that all the IEPs were reviewed annually on or before the date of the previous IEP.

### **Areas that need improvement**

The review team agrees that the Wolsey School District needs to improve in the area of team membership. Interviews showed that students are being invited to meetings informally and outside agencies are contacted but this is not always being documented. Written notice also needs improvement, transition is discussed at the meeting but the district must put this on the prior notice.

### **Areas out of compliance**

**24:05:27:01.03. Content of individualized education program.** Each student's individualized education program shall include a statement of the student's present levels of educational performance. The monitoring team determined that the present levels of performance were not linked to functional information gathered during the evaluation process. The present levels of performance page contained such statements as: “\_\_\_\_\_ is currently in the \_\_\_ grade and at Wolsey school and is currently taking classes which include.....” Another stated “\_\_\_\_\_ has average ability in all areas except for \_\_\_\_\_.”

**24:05:27:01.03. Content of individualized education program.** Each student's individualized education program shall include a statement of measurable annual goals, including benchmarks or short-term objectives. In four out of nine files reviewed, the students' annual goals were not consistently written as measurable. For example: “\_\_\_\_\_ will be able to express herself appropriately to her teachers.” “\_\_\_\_\_ will maintain a B average in her classes (with no short term objectives given).” “\_\_\_\_\_ will read at grade level.”

**24:05:27:01.03. Content of individualized education program.** Each student's individualized education program shall include an explanation of the extent, if any, to which the student will not participate with nondisabled students in the regular class and in extracurricular and non-academic activities. Seven out of nine files focused on what the student needed to do, rather than the reason for providing services outside of the regular classroom or just stated where services would be provided. These statements included: “At this time \_\_\_\_\_ needs to better his skills in reading, math, and general language arts/spelling.” “The team accepts the placement of general classroom, with access to the resource room study hall as needed, with modifications, as the proper placement.”

**24:05:27:13.02. Transition services.** Transition services are a coordinated set of activities for a student, designed within an outcome-oriented process, which promotes movement from school to post school activities, including postsecondary education, vocational training, integrated employment (including supported employment), continuing and adult education, adult services, independent living, or community participation. The coordinated set of activities shall be based on the individual student's needs, taking into account the student's preferences and interests, and shall include instruction, related services, community experiences, the development of employment and other post school adult living objectives, and, if appropriate, acquisition of daily living skills and functional vocational evaluation. The review team determined that in three out of three files of students who were transition age, there was not a transition plan in place as the service page did not refer back to goals and did not list service recommendations.

## **Principle 6 – Least Restrictive Environment**

After the IEP is developed or reviewed, the IEP team must decide where the IEP services are to be provided. Consideration begins in the general education classroom for school age students. The specific areas addressed in principle six are placement decisions, consent for initial placement, least restrictive environment procedures, preschool children, and LRE related issues.

## **Steering Committee Self-Assessment Summary**

Data sources used:

- Surveys
- General District Information
- File Reviews

### **Meets Requirements**

The steering committee found, based on surveys and file reviews, that all children in the Wolsey School District receive services in the least restrictive environment.

## **Validation Results**

### **Meets Requirements**

Through file reviews, observations, and interviews the review team agrees with the steering committee that all children receive services in the least restrictive environment. The teachers interviewed worked closely with the special education department to provide the supports that children may need to be successful. During an observation of an elementary computer class, the student who was on an IEP was indistinguishable from the other students. The para-educator who was in the class to assist him helped all the children in the room and the regular education teacher provided this student with chances to read and answer questions in the same manner that she addressed his classmates.